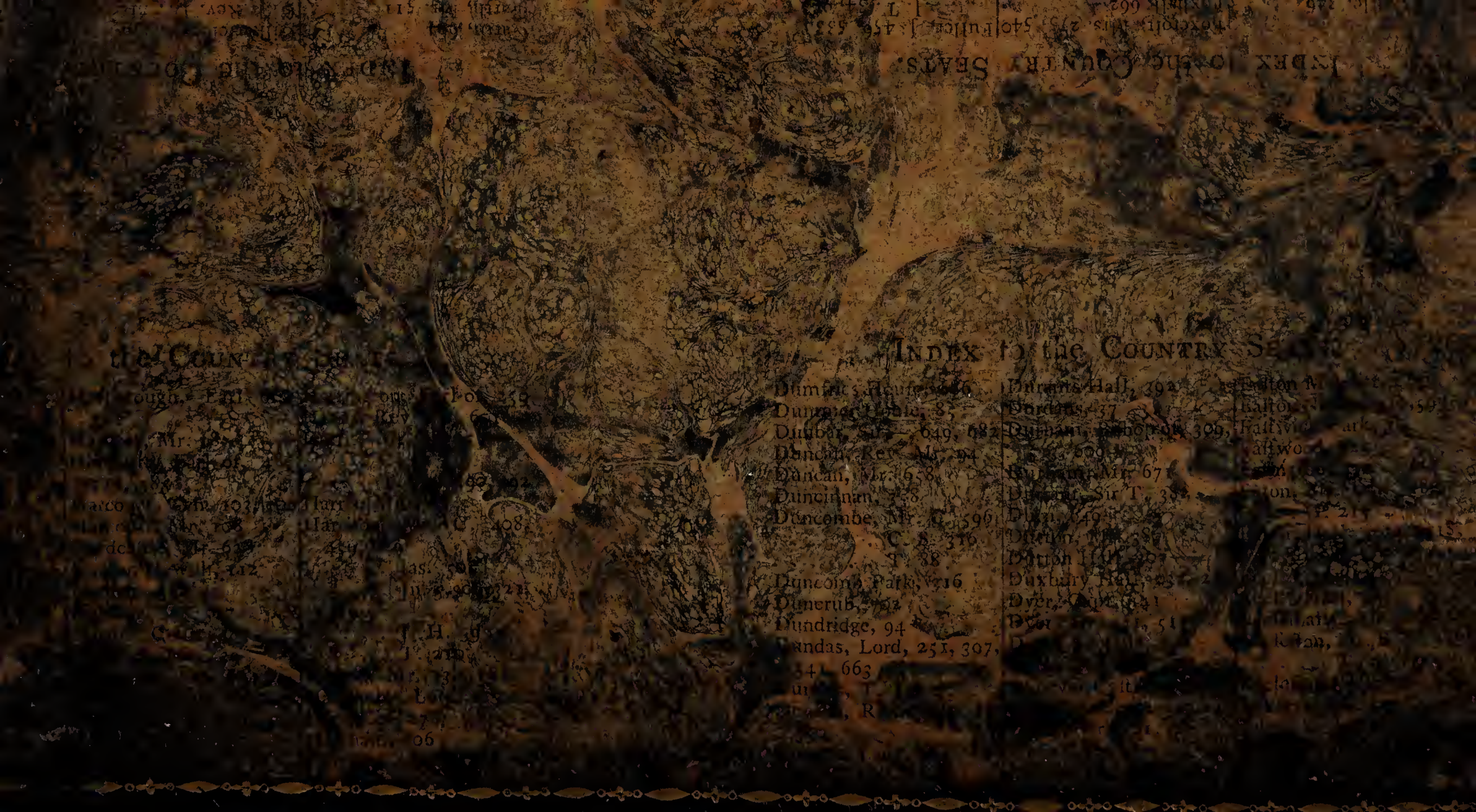

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N. VI
18/
Half-title wanting
CHRYSOPOIEA
VIAM PROSEQUOR

Edward Matthey.

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1893

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CHRYSOPOIEA:

BEING A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

Hermetical SCIENCE.

Wherein is proved by undeniable Arguments,

The Poſſibility of making GOLD by ART, in favour of the *Alchymiſts*. The Probability of it, learnedly diſcuſſed and refuted: And ſuch Cautions given to thoſe who are inclined to this Study, as will, if diligently attended to, prevent their falling into fatal Errors.

DEDICATED

To the Venerable Brethren of the Laudable Order of *R. C.*

LONDON:

Printed for J. ROBERTS in *Warwick-Lane.*

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READER,

I Would not have you take it ill (for if you ſhould, you yourſelf will have the worſt of it) when I tell you it's purely owing to Chance, that I have given you or myſelf the trouble of this Addreſs. For though Cuſtom has impoſed this ſort of a Tribute on Writers of all Claſſes, yet I am ſo accuſtomed to do things out of the common Road, and am naturally ſo great an Enemy to Loquacity either in myſelf or others, that had it not been for the ſake of filling up a blank Page or two, which I found was neceſſary, leſt you might complain of not having enough for your Money; 'tis a thouſand to one, but you had abruptly fell into Company with the following Diſſertation without ſo much as an Ingredere ut proficias. *You may perceive already I am a Plain-dealer, and do not pretend, like many other Writers, to* preſent *you with what I expect you ſhould pay for; ſo that if thoſe act with more Complaiſance, you muſt acknowledge I have the Advantage of 'em in point of Sincerity. I muſt own this is an unfaſhionable Principle;*

but as I am an old-fashioned Fellow, it's too late in the Day for me to think of conforming to Court Tastes and French *Fripperies: And therefore without further Circumlocution I shall let you know as succinctly as I can, what you are to expect from your Perusal of the subsequent Pages. The Treatise itself was originally wrote in the* Spanish *Language by a* Benedictine *Monk, the present Bishop of* Oviedo, *agreeable to the Philosophy of the Schools, and sufficiently shows the Author to be a Man of Ingenuity and Reading. As on the one side it must be acknowledged, that though his Arguments are not all of them conclusive, especially in what regards the Theory of the Alchymistical Art, they are offered with great Modesty, and far from that dogmatical Assurance we so often meet with in Churchmen of most Persuasions; but more especially in those who plead a sort of a Right to Infallibility. So, on the other hand, it's very evident his Inferences are not always fair; but seem to be clouded with such gross Prejudices, as are only becoming the vulgar and narrow-thinking Part of Mankind. And that I may not be thought to censure at random, I will produce an Instance or two.* A great Number of Alchymists, *says he,* have been found egregious Cheats. *The Inference he apparently would draw from thence is, That there is no such thing, nor ever was, as*

the

the Philoſopher's Stone. A much greater Number of Prieſts and Fryars, ſay I, nay ſome Biſhops and Popes too, have been guilty of flagitious Enormities. But would it be fair to infer from thence, that the Chriſtian Religion is a mere Non-entity; or that Morality conſiſts in potentia *only, but not in* eſſe? *I don't doubt but the ſame way of reaſoning, were there any thing in it, would equally hold good againſt every Sect of Philoſophers or Society of Men of all Arts and Sciences whatſoever from the Creation to this Day. But now to uſe this Author's own Words, the moſt conſpicuous, and at the ſame time the moſt ridiculous Objection he urges againſt the* Chryſopoiea; *and which by his manner of uſhering it in, he thinks abſolutely irreconcileable and unanſwerable, is,* That the Primordial Authors or Princes of the Chymical Sect are all a Rabble of *Sarazens* and *Mahometans*; (*he ſhould have added* Jews) whereas all, or almoſt all the Chriſtian Authors who have wrote on this Subject give for an indiſpenſible Precept, That he who intends to apply himſelf to this Art muſt be a good Chriſtian, devout, humble, of a right Intention, and of a pure Conſcience. *But what is all this to the purpoſe? For unleſs he could prove, that in* rerum natura *it's impoſſible there ever was, or ever can be ſuch a thing as a well-meaning, devout, honeſt*

Pagan

Pagan *or* Mahometan; *and that Morality was never inculcated, practiſed, or ſo much as thought of in any Part of the World before the Chriſtian Æra, and has been confined ever ſince to the Profeſſors of this Religion only; and that the Goſpel itſelf is not, ſtrictly ſpeaking, a perfect Syſtem of Morality: I ſay, without he can prove all this, I can ſee no Inconſiſtency in what theſe Chriſtian Authors have advanced in regard to the Qualifications that are requiſite in one who would be an Adept: ſuppoſing any of thoſe Authors ſhould have made uſe of the particular Epithet of* a good Chriſtian; *which nevertheleſs I do not remember to have found in one of them. 'Tis true, they all recommend Prayer, Humility, Sincerity, Temperance, Sobriety, and a Mind diveſted from Ambition and worldly Grandeur; and that theſe Qualifications may be found (and I am afraid more frequent, to our Shame and Reproach be it ſpoken) as well in* India, Perſia, *or* Turky, *as in the moſt refined Court or Country in* Europe, *is what I believe he will not conteſt: Or if he ſhould, the Experience of Travellers and Teſtimony of Hiſtorians of almoſt all Nations will ſufficiently ſhew his Miſtake, and evince the Truth of my Propoſition. But however, it is not for the Intereſt of Society in general, that the World ſhould think otherwiſe than it does; and therefore ſo far from endeavour-*

endeavouring to confute any thing elſe he has advanced, or perſuade Men of the Reality of the Subject, I ſhall only ſay, Si Mundus vult decipi decipiatur. *And,* Reader, *I muſt tell you further, my Opinion is, That if you have not Penetration enough to diſcover in* Virgil's *never-dying Verſe, the grand Key that opens the Door to this ineſtimable Treaſure of the Philoſopher's Stone, you'll not find it in any Book that ever was, or ever will be wrote while the World ſtands. As to the following Tranſlation, if any of my Readers ſhould find fault with the Style, and ſay it might have been better; they ſhall readily have my Concurrence: for I am not ſo cholerick, as to diſpute and quarrel with 'em about Trifles. Nay, ſhould they be malicious enough to put the Queſtion home to me, and ſay, Why then did you not mend it? I am condeſcending enough to furniſh them with two or three Anſwers, that they may apply which of 'em they like beſt. As for Example: Perhaps I thought the more literal the Tranſlation could be, provided I kept clear of Barbariſms, it would be much the ſafer; for fear of deviating from the genuine Senſe of the Original. Or perhaps I was of Opinion, a plain Style beſt ſuited the Nature of the Subject. Or perhaps after all, I could not write a better. And now, if I am not mightily miſtaken, the laſt of theſe will be moſt agreeable to the Com-*

plexion.

plexion and Conſtitution of the major Part of my Readers; therefore I hope I have ſettled that Point to their Satisfaction. In the next place I ſuppoſe it will be ask'd, Was there ever any thing more abſurd, than to place what I call a Dedication at the End of the Work? This, I muſt confeſs, is literally quite out of the way; *and my Printer was ſo good-natur'd as to give me a hint of it: but he was perfectly convinc'd by the Reaſon I gave him, That ſhould it have ſtood in Front, and been firſt read, perhaps the Reader's Curioſity would have been ſatisfy'd; and then what would become of the Book itſelf? I can't take upon me to determine, whether this Reaſon may be altogether ſo cogent to my Readers as it was to my Printer; but, as in the Caſe above, if they diſapprove of it, I freely conſent to their ſubſtituting a better in its ſtead, if they can think of one; for I declare I can't at preſent. Thus with the utmoſt Frankneſs and Submiſſion I lay open my Defects, leaving my Readers to be the Judges, and to paſs Sentence on my Performance. And this I may as well do as not; becauſe if they buy the Book, they will after Peruſal (but not till then) have an undoubted Right, without my Leave, to think of it as they pleaſe; and I am not ſo vain as to imagine any thing I can ſay will be able to prevent 'em from ſpeaking what they think of it, be it good or ill.*

And

And now, Reader, I ſhall for a Concluſion make bold with the uſual Phraſe of a late famous Divinity Profeſſor, who liv'd ſomewhere or another, it's no matter where: Finem jam faciam, nam te probè exercui. *Our Acquaintance together being yet but very ſlender (and were it more ſubſtantial, I muſt tell you I abominate Ceremony) I can only ſay, if you are one of the very few of whom the inimitable* Perſius *has given us the Deſcription,*

Compoſitum jus, faſque animo, ſanctoſque receſſus
Mentis, & incoctum generoſo pectus honeſto.

I honour and reſpect you, and ſhould be proud to call you Friend. An Appellation I am not very ready to conform with the Faſhion of beſtowing at random. But if you are like many others I have met with in my Travels, Vox & præterea nihil, *I care not how little I have to do with you; ſo farewell.*

CHRYSOPOIEA:

OR, A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

Hermetical Science.

AN inordinate Desire of Riches, that *Auri sacra Fames* of the Poet, has given Rise to the pretended Invention of two particular Arts; the one is, how to make that most precious Metal, so much desired by People of all Ranks and Conditions; the other is, how to search after and discover That already made by Nature, in its hidden Recesses in the Bowels of the Earth. The Aim and End of the first, is the Transmutation of all other Metals into Gold; which

which, according to the *Greek*, is called *Chryſopoiea*, or the Art of making Gold. The ſecond conſiſts in the right Knowledge and Uſe of what is called the *Virga Divinatoria*; and by the common People, the Miner's Rod or Wand. We ſhall confine ourſelves in this Diſcourſe to the firſt of theſe.

The Art of making Gold, according to the eſtabliſh'd Opinion of Men of Judgment and Probity, is an ancient but vain Undertaking, ariſing from Avarice: An agreeable Deluſion, which begins in a Dream, and goes on till it oftentimes ends in Diſtraction. An amuſing kind of a Method of reducing to Poverty thoſe that aſpire to be Rich, by prompting them to waſte in fruitleſs Experiments the Gold they already have, in ſearching after That they are never likely to be Maſters of. The major Part of Philoſophers look upon this Art as abſolutely impoſſible; but, on the contrary, the Alchymiſt aſſures us poſitively of its Exiſtence. We are of Opinion both one and the other are miſtaken; and therefore taking the middle Way, we ſhall readily agree to its Poſſibility, in Oppoſition to the Philoſophers; and abſolutely deny its Exiſtence, againſt the Alchymiſts. And this we think we ſhall be able to make good

by

by ſuch forcible Arguments, which if not convincing, it will be found a very difficult matter to bring others that ſhall have Weight enough to preponderate the Scale on the other ſide of the Queſtion.

The Author who, under the Name of *Theophilus*, tranſlated and illuſtrated with Notes and Additions the Treatiſe of Alchymy of *Æireneus Philalethes*, philoſophizes very prettily upon the Poſſibility of artificial Gold: He explains aptly enough in what Manner Art is able to perform the Works of Nature, which conſiſts in the Uſe of certain Subjects and natural Agents; ſo that Nature is the Performer, and gives the Activity; and all that Art has to do in the matter, is the right Direction and Application of thoſe Subjects and Agents adequate to the End propoſed. He proves ſolidly and conſiſtent with the vulgar Philoſophy, the undeniable Poſſibility of making Gold by Art; for, according to the *Peripatetick* School, Matter being indifferent for all Forms, if the Artiſt meets with the Agent proper to introduce into it the Form of Gold, applying it as it ought to be apply'd, he will doubtleſs attain the Production or Eduction of the ſaid Form. He lays down the Chymical Principles, and applies them very rationally and methodically to his purpoſe.

poſe. In fine, with the ſo much talk'd-of Experiment of the Tranſmutation of Iron into Copper by means of the Lapis Stone or blue Vitriol, he accounts plauſibly enough for the Poſſibility of metallick Tranſmutation.

From hence we ſhall further obſerve, that the Argument taken from the Indifference of Matter for all Forms, although propounded by the afore-mention'd Author only in the Terms of the *Ariſtotelian* Philoſophy, has ſtill a more apparent Force in thoſe of the *Carteſian*: For, as in the Syſtem of *Deſcartes*, the Variety of Mixts conſiſts only in the different Texture and Configuration of their Parts; according to this Syſtem, the Artiſt has leſs to do for the Production of any Mixt whatſoever than in the *Ariſtotelian*; beeauſe he has no need to derive that new Entity from the Matter, which the *Ariſtotelians* call ſubſtantial Form, but only to vary the Texture and Figure of the Parts; which comes equally, or indeed with more Propriety, under the Juriſdiction of Art rather than Nature. For which reaſon ſome ſay, (and they ſay well) that the Compoſition of natural Mixts, as *Deſcartes* propoſes them, is rather artificial than natural. At leaſt it is certain, that the Form of artificial Compounds conſiſts only

only in the Contexture and Configuration of the Parts whereof they are compounded.

It muſt be obſerv'd by the way, that this Argument is not at all adapted to the Syſtem of the Atomiſts, who do not admit of a Matter indifferent for all Forms. For, according to their Opinion, the Figure and Motion of the Atoms being invariable, any Atoms whatſoever cannot compoſe any Mixt whatſoever; ſo that Nature not being able to alter in any manner thoſe ultimate indiviſible Particles of Matter which theſe Philoſophers have fram'd, is neceſſitated for the Formation of ſuch particular Mixt, to make uſe of ſuch Atoms as are its Elements. As Nature therefore cannot make any Mixt whatſoever of any Matter whatſoever, with greater Reaſon may it be ſuppos'd that Art cannot do it; which in all its Productions brings nothing to Perfection without the Aſſiſtance and Example of Nature.

For this Reaſon, in order to prove the Poſſibility of artificial Gold, by an Argument that may be adapted to every philoſophical Syſtem, it muſt of neceſſity be form'd not on the firſt Matter, nor yet on a Matter remote from Gold; but on the proximate Matter be it what it will. It's certain,

that in the Formation of Mixts of all the three Kingdoms, animal, vegetable, and mineral, Nature does not immediately make uſe of Matter totally void of Form; nor yet indifferently of Matter already inveſted with any Form whatſoever; but with Matter already inveſted with a determinate Form, which Form has been given it as a Prelude or Preliminary to the Form of the Mixt which ſhe labours to produce. Thus an Animal is produc'd from Matter that has anteriorly receiv'd the Form of an Embryo. A Plant, from Matter inveſted with the Form of Seed. The Matter proximate to Minerals does not ſo occur to our Senſes, as that we can be certain what it is; but there is no Doubt that in a proportionate degree they have their ſeminal Matter: and as to Metals themſelves many Philoſophers judge they procreate from true and actual Seed, and that they are really and ſtrictly ſpeaking Vegetables; for which Reaſon they do not ſcruple to give them the Name of ſubterranean Plants.

But whether Metals are Vegetables or not, 'tis undeniable that immediate to their Generation, Matter preceded under ſome determinate Form, wherewith is made a Maſs or Subſtance which ſerves to the Purpoſe of Seed, Prelude or Rudiment of the metallick

metallick Compound that Nature intends to produce. Whether this Maſs is compounded of Vapour and Exhalation, as *Ariſtotle* will needs have it, or of Sulphur and Mercury, as the Chemiſt pretends, or of Acid, Alcali, and Sulphur, as many of the Moderns are of Opinion, or of Water and Earth, as others imagine; let which ſoever of theſe Opinions prevail, our Hypotheſis ſtands eſtabliſhed.

It is in like manner certain, That there is ſome determinate Agent, which working upon this proximate Matter reduces it to the State of a Metal. Upon theſe undeniable Propoſitions we form our Syllogiſm in this manner: Art is capable of applying ſuch an Agent, whatever it be, as has Activity to form Gold from that proximate Matter whereof Gold is form'd; then Art is capable of making Gold. The Conſequence is evident, and the Antecedent undeniable; for ſuppoſing that there is in Nature ſuch an Agent, and ſuch a Patient, and that they are applicable one to the other; what Reaſon can be aſſigned why it is not poſſible that the Induſtry of Man ſhould find them out, know and apply them?

Thus far we are Advocates for the Alchymists, but not a ſtep further; for leaving the Subject in this general State, the Poſſibility of artificial Gold ſeems to be prov'd effectually. But when you proceed to the Matter and the Agent, which the Alchymists would make you believe are to be employed in order to attain it, you hardly meet with a Suppoſition or a Propoſition that does not appear to be falſe, or at leaſt doubtful. We will here lay down by way of Compendium the Doctrine of thoſe few who have wrote ſo as to be underſtood, as *Bernard Treviſan*, *Theobald Hogheland*, the Tranſlator of *Philalethes* and ſome few others; for as to the reſt, who purpoſely talk nothing but Gibberiſh, Who can pretend to oppugn or refute them, if it is not poſſible for any body to underſtand them?

Firſt then, They tell us that all Metals conſiſt of the ſelf-ſame ſpecific Principles; or in other Words to the ſame purpoſe, That the proximate Matter of all Metals is ſpecifically one and the ſame; that is to ſay, Sulphur and Mercury.

2dly, They tell us that Metals differ from one another only according to their greater or leſſer accidental Perfections; which depends

pends upon the greater or leſſer degree of Purification, Depuration, Decoction, Exaltation, or Fixation of the Sulphur and Mercury whereof they conſiſt. Conſonant to this they tell us in the third Place:

3dly, That any Metal whatſoever may be tranſmuted into Gold, exalting it from its imperfect State to a State of Perfection; promoting by the Aſſiſtance of Art thoſe degrees of Depuration, Purification, and Fixation of the Sulphur and Mercury, which are neceſſary for that purpoſe.

4thly, They ſay that in order to perform this, they are to ſeek for Agents, the philoſophical Sulphur and Mercury; the firſt whereof they call the maſculine Agent and the other the feminine; and in theſe two when mixed or amalgated together by a due philoſophical Proceſs, reſides the ſeminal Virtue adequate to the Production of Gold.

5thly, They ſay that this philoſophical Sulphur and Mercury muſt be ſought for in Gold itſelf, for the Diſſolution of this Metal into its firſt Principles.

6thly, They ſay that this Sulphur and Mercury wherein Gold is diſſolved, are not philoſo-

philoſophical in their natural State; that is to ſay, They have not yet the tranſmutative Activity; but they muſt of neceſſity be exalted to a much greater Perfection by Art; and after they are thus exalted they have the Virtue to tinge and intimately to penetrate the other Metals, giving the Sulphur and Mercury whereof theſe conſiſt, that ultimate degree of Fixation whereby they become Gold. This Mixture of Sulphur and Mercury ſo exalted, wherein reſides the tranſmutative Virtue, is what they call Elixir, Tincture of Gold, or according to the vulgar Phraſe, the Philoſopher's Stone; although according to their own Deſcription of it, 'tis not in the Form or Conſiſtence of a Stone, but a Magiſtery or Powder.

This brief Account of their Doctrine, ſtated with the greateſt Perſpicuity the Subject will admit of, is all that one finds intelligible amongſt the alchymiſtical Writings; the reſt is nothing but Dreams, Allegories, enigmatical Phraſes, and Contradictions of one another. Even in ſome Particulars of thoſe we have juſt recited, there is no ſmall Difficulty to underſtand their meaning; inſomuch that a Perſon peruſing any two diſtinct Authors, can hardly avoid making a different Conception on the

Point

Point he is endeavouring to ſatisfy himſelf in. As for Inſtance, one Author indicates the Matter of the Philoſophers Stone to be only the Sulphur of Gold; another the Sulphur and Mercury; others again, the Mercury alone. And were it not for the Explication that *Bernard Treviſan* (an Author of ſpecial Authority amongſt the Profeſſors of Alchimy) gives to this ſeeming Contradiction, it would have remain'd as great a Myſtery as the reſt. He, indeed, endeavours to ſolve this Paradox by ſaying, That the philoſophical Sulphur and Mercury are not two Subſtances; that they are never ſeparate, but contained and envelloped, as it were, one in the other, that is to ſay, the Sulphur in the Mercury. *Ex his manifeſte patet* (theſe are *Treviſan*'s Words) *Sulphur non eſſe quid per ſe ſeorſim extra ſubſtantiam Mercurii.* And a little further, where he cites *Geber*, *In profundo naturæ Mercurii eſt Sulphur.*

We have already ſaid, and now ſay it again, there is not in all this Series of Doctrine any one Poſition that is not either falſe or doubtful. And firſt, it ſuppoſes the chymical Principles to be as follows; (which we can by no means grant, becauſe the Exiſtence of thoſe very Principles is ſo uncertain, that nothing can be more ſo,)

That

That all Mixts are compounded of Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury, which they call active Principles; and of Water and Earth which they call paſſive. But this is what the Sectaries of the chymical Syſtem are far from proving; for all they can pretend with Certainty is, that in the Solution of Mixts made by the means of Fire, they perceive theſe five Subſtances to be ſeparated. But this Proof is very defective, becauſe they cannot be ſure whether the Fire ſeparates or produces them; for which Reaſon, as that great Chymiſt *Boyle* obſerves, the Experiment alledg'd is better adapted to infer that Salt, Sulphur and Mercury, are made from Mixts, than that Mixts are compounded of Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury. And if the great Activity which the Fire hath to introduce a new Texture even in the inſenſible Parts of ſuch Bodies as are diſſolved by it, be obſerv'd, it will be found highly probable, that from its Action, new Subſtances reſult which did not exiſt in the diſſolved Body. For Inſtance, by the Action of Fire we ſee, that from Earth and Aſhes, or even from Earth itſelf, if the Action of the Fire is very violent, is form'd that tranſparent Subſtance which we call Glaſs; Who, for this Reaſon, will take it into their Heads that the Earth is form'd of Glaſs? But further,

thoſe

thoſe five Principles are extracted from ſome determined Mixts; not from all or any Mixts whatſoever, as *Boyle* confeſſes, and with him, other Chymiſts of Veracity. Again, from ſome Mixts, beſides the five Principles, other Subſtances are extracted different from all of 'em. The ſame *Boyle* gives us an Example in the Juice of Grapes, which by various Operations is reduced into many Subſtances of different Textures and Virtues; whereof ſome have not the leaſt Affinity with the chymical Principles. Still further, the Separation, which as more peculiar and ſenſible may be attributed to Fire, is that whereby the Fixed is divided from the Volatile; this being diſſipated in Smoke, and that remaining in Aſhes: Notwithſtanding, even this Separation is deceitful; for from Smoke condenſed into Soot, is drawn by a freſh Solution, Salt and Earth, which are fix'd. They that deſire to ſee more into the Fallacy of chymical Experiments, may poſſibly be fully convinc'd, if they attend to what *Boyle* has left us on that Subject in his ſceptical Chymiſt; for as to my own Part, the Authority of this great Man is ſufficient, ſince by the Confeſſion of the Learned of all Nations, in what related to experimental Phyſicks, he has not been exceeded

by any Body, in Knowledge, Exactitude, and Veracity.

Secondly, We muſt remark, that the Alchymiſts themſelves (at leaſt thoſe of them that have fallen under our Obſervation) make a material and ſubſtantial Alteration in the chymical Syſtem. For in the Compoſition of Metals they only introduce Sulphur and Mercury, without making any mention of Salt; which latter, the Chymiſts account as indiſpenſably an Element of all Mixts, without excepting one, as are Sulphur and Mercury. And here it's well worthy to be obſerv'd, that Salt being, according to the chymical Doctrine, what gives Weight and Tenacity to Bodies, it ought ſo much the rather to enter into the Compoſition of Metals; and more eſpecially of Gold, that being the wieghtieſt Mixt, and of the firmeſt Texture of any hitherto known.

Thirdly, Suppoſing we ſhould admit that Metals conſiſt of the Principles aſſign'd them, Sulphur and Mercury. We aſk then, Are each of theſe two Principles homogeneous, or ſpecifically one and the ſame in all Metals? This is what cannot be affirmed with the leaſt Likelihood. We ſee that the Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury, or to ſpeak more

more properly, the Salt, Oil, and Spirit, which by Diſtillation are extracted from Plants, are as different from one another, as the Plants themſelves; and in like manner have very different Properties, Virtues, and Uſes in Medicine. The ſame therefore may be reaſonably ſuppoſed to happen in Metals, wherein there does not appear a leſſer Degree of Diſſimilitude amongſt themſelves, than in Plants: Nay, there is a greater than in ſome Plants, whoſe Principles are found to be very diſtinct. The Sulphur and Mercury being then diſtinct in diſtinct Metals; it follows that Gold can never be made, *ex. gr.* from the Sulphur and Mercury of Iron, any more than that from the Sulphur, Salt, Mercury, Earth, and Water of one Plant, another Plant may be made ſpecifically diſtinct.

We are well aware of what the Alchymiſts will anſwer to this Objection in Defence of their Doctrine. They will ſay, that every Plant is a perfect Mixt of itſelf, originally intended ſo by Nature, as are all the reſt contained under the ſame Gender. But it is not ſo with Metals, in whom Nature always endeavours the Production of Gold; and the other Metals are to be look'd on in regard to Gold, only as the ſame Subſtance or Matter in different Stages or De-

grees of Perfection or Imperfection: So that though the baſer Metals partake of the ſame Principles which compound or are deſtin'd to compound Gold; yet it very often happens, that Nature does not arrive at Perfectiton in the Work ſhe originally deſign'd; either from the Impurities of the Matrix, or becauſe the Principles are not combined in the due proportionate Quantities to each other, or by ſome other Impediment or Caſualty.

But all this is no more than meer *gratis dictum*, and deſtitute of all Probability. For if the Intention of Nature was only to form Gold, and the Diſtinction between it and the inferior Metals were no other than between the Imperfect and the Perfect in things of one and the ſame Claſs; we ſhould frequently, in the ſame Gold Mines, and in the ſame Vein, which at laſt by the Force of a greater Decoction, or Depuration, comes to be Gold, perceive it firſt in a State of Lead, then Tin, Iron, Copper, and Silver. In the ſame manner, as when Nature intends a Fruit Tree in its due Magnitude, we perceive it go gradually, paſſing from leſſer Dimenſions to greater; and although ſhe intends the Fruit thereof ſhould be ripe and high-flavour'd, we firſt perceive it in different Degrees of Inſipidity

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and Immaturity. And this Compariſon will be found to be well adapted, if it be recollected, the Alchymiſts call that laſt Degree of Perfection which the Metallick Principles attain to in Gold, by the Name of Maturity. But as Experience ſhews us, nothing of this Kind has ever appeared in Mines, it ſeems plain that the other Metals are perfect Mixts of themſelves, adequately diſtinct from Gold, and as well as that, was primarily or originally intended ſo to be by Nature, that is to ſay, perfect Mixts.

It's no Objection to what has been ſaid, that in all, or almoſt all the Mines in the World, Gold is found mix'd with Silver, Copper, or other Metals; for this depends on the Matter whereof Gold is made, not happening to be pure in the Boſom of the Earth, but blended with the Matter of other Metals: Rather, if all Metals were convertible into Gold, this Metal would many times be found pure in the Mines of other Metals; that is to ſay, at the time wherein the other Metals arriv'd at perfect Maturity. Beſides, Gold is ſometimes found mixt with Earth, but the Alchymiſts do not ever the more pretend that Earth is converted into Gold. We are not ignorant of what the Sieur *Borri* related to Monſieur

ſieur *Monconi*, that he had ſeen the Metal in a Mine of Silver converted into Gold in the Space of one Night, by means of a copious Vapour that had aſcended out of the Earth. Monſieur *Monconi* recounts this Story in his Journey to the *Low Countries*; but *Borri* did not deſerve much Credit, and a great deal leſs in this Matter; becauſe he endeavoured to perſuade all the World of the Poſſibility of the Philoſopher's Stone, and that he was on the Point of having it.

Fourthly, Suppoſe we ſhould admit that its proper Tincture may be extracted from Gold, call it Mercury or Sulphur or both, it is falſe that therein reſides the ſeminal and active Virtue of Gold. Which we prove thus; Neither the Mercury nor the Sulphur of Gold, nor both together are the Agents by means whereof Nature makes Gold; therefore the active Virtue of Gold does not reſide in them. The Conſequence is plain; for the Alchymiſts themſelves confeſs Art alone has no Activity, nor can produce any Agent whatever; but is only capable of applying the ſame Agent which Nature makes uſe of. We prove the Antecedent thus: Nature for the Production of Gold makes no uſe of Sulphur and Mercury, neither before they arrive at that perfect Depuration or Maturity which they muſt neceſſarily have

have to compoſe this Metal; nor afterwards. Not the firſt, becauſe the metallick Principles in their State of Imperfection cannot produce the greateſt metallick Perfection, as that of Gold is. Nor yet the ſecond, becauſe when the Sulphur and Mercury attain their perfect Depuration, the Gold is then formed; Gold itſelf being nothing elſe, according to the Alchymiſts, but the compounded Mixt of depurated Sulphur and Mercury.

The Alchymiſts encounter us with two ſtrong Arguments (as they take them to be) for their Opinion. The firſt is the Experiment alledg'd by the Tranſlator of *Philalethes*, of Iron converted into Copper by means of the Lapis Stone or blue Vitriol; which proves that one Metal may be converted into another Metal more perfect.

To this we anſwer, Firſt, It does not appear to us, whether what reſults from the Operation in this Experiment be truly Copper, or only the Iron depurated from ſome of its groſſer Parts, whereby it acquires that Reſemblance of Copper. Secondly, It does not neceſſarily follow, That becauſe Lead, Tin, and Iron may be converted into Copper, therefore any Metal whatever may be converted into Gold; becauſe it may

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be thoſe Metals conſiſt of the ſame Principles as Copper; or they may be the ſame Metal in Subſtance, without any other Diſtinction than what may ariſe from the Mixture of other heterogeneous Subſtances. Nor can it be fairly deduced from hence, that Gold is one and the ſame with the other Metals, or that it conſiſts of the ſame Principles that they do. We muſt confeſs notwithſtanding, that if there is no Fallacy in the Experiments alledg'd by the Tranſlator of *Philalethes* in regard to the Tranſmutation of Iron, Tin, and Lead into Copper, this Argument is not deſtitute of Plauſibility.

The ſecond Argument, which is the very *Achilles* of all the Alchymiſts, is founded on the Hiſtories there are extant of various Profeſſors of *Chryſopoiea*, who have actually performed the Tranſmutation of other Metals into Gold. The moſt famous, and thoſe of whom there ſeems to be any likelihood of their having arrived to the Poſſeſſion of this grand Secret, are *Raymond Lully*, *Arnoldus de Villa-nova*, *Theophraſtus Paracelſus*, *Bernard Treviſan*, an Apothecary named *Anthony* of the ſame City of *Treves*; and laſtly, *Nicholas Flamel*.

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But the Force of this pompous Argument will fall to the ground as ſoon as we have made it appear, that there is none in theſe Relations themſelves. Not one of the Authors or Relators of them were Eye-witneſſes of the Facts; all of them have written upon the weak Foundation of popular Rumours, which commonly ariſe from the moſt trifling Occaſions; and in this Matter they are more ſubject to Error and Deception than in any other, from the cunning Stratagems and deceitful Appearances which the Alchymiſts are wont to make uſe of to perſuade People of their being Maſters of the Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone.

Again, if we conſider attentively theſe very Hiſtories they alledge, we ſhall find innumerable Circumſtances to induce us, not barely to ſuſpend our Judgment, but abſolutely to reject their Teſtimony.

Of *Raymond Lully* it is ſaid, That in the Tower of *London*, by Order and in Preſence of the then King of *England*, he made Gold of an excellent Quality; and from that Gold was coined a Species of Money which they called *Raymond*'s Noble. But who is it that teſtifies this? Why

truly, *Robert Conſtantine* a Phyſician of *Caen* in *Normandy*, who lived two Centuries after *Raymond Lully*; and all who make mention of this Story cite it from him. We have ſcarce need to aſk, whether or no in a Fact of this nature we ought to believe a *French* Author ſo poſterior to *Lully*; notwithſtanding the Silence of all the *Engliſh* Authors of that and the following Century. 'Tis true, *Raymond Lully* wrote on this Art, and affirmed that he was Maſter of it; (provided nevertheleſs the Treatiſe on this Subject which bears his Name, and whereof we have ſeen ſome Fragments, be really his own.) But this proves nothing, ſo long as it does not appear, that any body has learnt to make Gold by thoſe Inſtructions; which we may ſafely venture to affirm will never happen.

Of *Arnoldus Villa-nova* it is related, by ſome Counſellor of the Law, quoted by *Beyerlink* in his Treatiſe of human Life, and by Father *Delrio* in his *Magical Diſquiſitions*; That by the Art of Alchymy he made ſome little Bars of Gold, which he publickly offered in *Rome* to all Tryals: But how is it credible, that the Fact being ſo publick, the Pope who then reigned, ſhould not have taken the Advantage of it; it being ſo eaſy from this Ability of *Arnoldus* to

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have amaſſed together vaſt Treaſures for the Benefit of the Church? In point of Conſcience he ought to have done it; and ſeeing he did no ſuch thing, it's plain that *Arnoldus* did not give thoſe Tokens of his Skill which are related of him; and that thoſe Counſellors they recite it from, had no other Teſtimony of the Fact than ſome vulgar idle Prate.

Of *Paracelſus* there is no other Witneſs than his Diſciple *Ophorinus*, who relates many incredible things of his Maſter. Beſides, he does not ſay that he ever ſaw him tranſmute any Metal into Gold; but only that ſometimes over-night being wretchedly poor, he the next Morning would ſhew him ſome Pieces of both Gold and Silver, pretending to have made them by the Art of Alchymy. But how do we know that *Paracelſus* had not this Gold and Silver hid, in order to ſhew it to *Ophorinus* at a proper time, to make him believe that he poſſeſſed the Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone; which he would fain have made all the World believe? There is ſo much Vanity and ſo little Foundation in all *Paracelſus* either ſaid or wrote, that it is needleſs to heſitate on this blind Piece of Evidence. Other Authors who bragg'd of knowing the *Chryſopoiea*, wrote of this Art in Gibberiſh. *Para-*

celſus wrote in Gibberiſh even when he treated of Phyſick.

As to *Bernard Treviſan*, or the Count of *la Marca Treviſana*, we don't know it appears any other ways that he knew how to make Gold artificially, than that he himſelf ſays ſo, in his Book *de Secretiſſimo Philoſophorum opere Chymico*. And we cannot think he is to be believ'd on his own bare Aſſertion, eſpecially when in that very Work he gives ſufficient Signs of his being a vain and lying Author. One needs nothing more to be undeceived in regard to him, than to take notice of the romantick Authors or ſuppoſititious Books that are quoted by him; ſuch as the *Chronicles* of *Solomon*, the *Pandects* of *Mary* the Propheteſs, the *Teſtament* of *Pythagoras*, the Path of thoſe that err, wrote by *Plato*; no body knows what ſhort Treatiſe of *Euclid*, the Book of one *Ariſteus*, who he ſays governed the whole World ſixteen Years, and was the moſt excellent of all the Alchymiſts ſince *Hermes*.

And here it will not be amiſs to remark, That whatever the Alchymiſts may ſay of theſe and other Authors of the greateſt pretended Antiquity, who have treated of the *Chrypoſoiea*, is all but meer Dreams and Invention.

vention. The celebrated Phyſician of *Leyden*, *Herman Boerhaave*, who carefully examined this Matter; ſays, *(In Prologom. ad inſtitut. Chemiæ,)* The ancienteſt Writer who mentions any thing concerning *Chryſopoiea*, was *Æneas Gaſſerus*, who flouriſh'd about the End of the fifth, or Beginning of the ſixth Century; and the Firſt who treated doctrinally on this Subject, was *Geber*, or *Gebro*, who ſome make an *Arabian*, others a *Greek*: He flouriſh'd in the ſeventh Century.

Of the Apothecary of *Treves*, *Cardanus* relates, That in Preſence of *Andres Gritti*, Duke of *Venice*, and the principal Patricians of that Republick, he converted Quick-ſilver into Gold. *Julius Cæſar Scaliger* makes the ſame Objection to this Story againſt *Cardanus*, that we made above, in regard to *Arnoldus de Villa-nova*; If this, ſays he, had been true, the *Venetian* Senate would have made uſe of this Man to have enriched the Republick with immenſe Treaſures, and might have oblig'd him even to have revealed the Secret. Father *Delrio* deſpiſes this Objection, and imagines, he anſwers the firſt Part of it, by aſking, How does *Scaliger* know but that the Senate did ſo? To the latter he anſwers, that he ſuppoſes thoſe Senators either deſpis'd it as a doubtful

Matter, or look'd on that Experiment as a Piece of pure Legerdemain. A weak Solution of a ſtrong Argument! As to the firſt, we ſay, that *Scaliger* knew, and we know too, that the Senate did not make themſelves Maſters of the Art of making Gold; becauſe, if they had done ſo, they would likewiſe have made themſelves Maſters of the whole *Ottoman* Empire; nay, of the whole World, as any Republick whaſoever might and would do, if they could augment their Treaſures without Limits. As to the Second, who can believe that the Senate having it in their Power ſeriouſly to examine the Matter of Fact, and to ſcrutinize thoroughly an Affair of ſuch Importance, that they would not do it? The Apothecary of *Treves* was a Subject of the Republick; for *Treves* is in the *Venetian* Dominions, and therefore it might juſtly oblige him to work for it. It is therefore indubitable, that in caſe the Experiment had been found to be certain, they would have availed themſelves of the Artiſt; and in caſe of its being judg'd doubtful, they would apply themſelves by the ſtricteſt Tryals to diſcover the Truth: If they did ſo, it's plain they found the Art deluſive, becauſe they made no uſe of the Artiſt. Father *Delrio*, to ſtrengthen the Teſtimony of *Cardanus*, adds that of

Gulielmus

Gulielmus Aragoſius, which is to be ſeen in his Theatre of human Life. *(Vera Chymia.)* But beſides, that the Relation of *Aragoſius* in the Theatre is deſtitute of any Citation to ſupport it, it contains ſome other Circumſtances which render it quite improbable.

Nicholas Flamel, a Native of *Paris*, who lived in the Beginning of the fifteenth Century, and boaſted likewiſe of poſſeſſing the Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone, was he that amongſt all the pretended Adepts, had the moſt apparent Right of being believed. *La Croix Dumaine*, quoted in *Moreri*'s Dictionary, deſcribes him a very ingenious Man; for he ſays, he was a Poet, a Painter, a Philoſopher, a Mathematician, and above all, a grand Alchymiſt. In the Burying-place of the *Holy Innocents* where he was interred, is fixed up a Board painted in Oil-colours, wherein under enigmatical Figures and Hieroglyphicks, they ſay, are repreſented the Secrets which he attained to by the alchymiſtical Art. The principal Circumſtance, and what makes moſt to the Purpoſe is, that whereas thoſe who boaſt of having the Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone are for the moſt Part a Parcel of Poor Ragamuffins, who in their Nakedneſs and Poverty carry along with them

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...table Teſtimony of their Falſity. ...olas *Flamel* on the contrary, it's well known came to be Maſter of an Eſtate of Five hundred thouſand Piſtoles; a prodigious Sum, eſpecially for that Age. Nevertheleſs ſome *French* Authors of good Judgment have diſcovered in this Acquiſition of Wealth, another Secret very different from the Philoſopher's Stone. They ſay, that *Flamel* having the handling and Management of the Finances, gain'd this unweildy Eſtate by Robberies and Extortions, eſpecially upon the *Jews* of that Kingdom; and in order to hide the iniquitous Method whereby he had amaſſed ſo much Riches, and to avoid the Puniſhment he deſerved, he feigned thoſe Treaſures to be owing to the Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone.

The Tranſlator of *Philalethes* omitting ſeveral of the Examples before-mentioned, which indeed are trite; produces three others more particular, and not ſo commonly known: The firſt is of the King of *Spain*, called *Don Alonzo el Sabio*, or the Wiſe; whom he cites from his Treatiſe, entitled, *Of the Treaſure*; wherein he ſays, that by means of the Philoſopher's Stone he made Gold, and very often augmented his Eſtate. We acknowledge we have never

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ſeen this Writing of the King, *Don Alonzo*'s, though we have heard of it; but we may be very confident he never knew the Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone, for if he had, he would never have been ſo deſtitute of Means, that for want thereof he loſt his Kingdom. Let any one read but the 5th Chapter of the 14th Book of the Father *Mariana*'s Hiſtory, wherein are theſe Words, ſpeaking of *Don Alonzo*: "Nothing "gaul'd him ſo much as the Want of Mo-"ney: A Circumſtance that defeats the "grandeſt Deſigns of Princes." And this great Hiſtorian preſently adds, That to ſupply this Defect he cauſed new Money to be coined of Silver and Copper, of a baſer Alloy and ſmaller Weight than what had been cuſtomary, retaining the former Value; by which means he gave the finiſhing Stroke to irritate his Vaſſals. A notable Sign this, of his being able to multiply his Eſtate as much as he had a mind to, by the Alchymiſtical Art.

The ſecond Example is of the Emperor *Ferdinand* the Third, of whom (on the Credit of *Zwelpher*, in his *Mantiſſa Eſpagirica*) 'tis ſaid; That with his own Hands he made, in the City of *Prague*, from three Pounds of Quickſilver, two Pounds and a half of pure Gold, with only one Grain of

the Philoſophical Tincture; of which Gold he ſent Father *Kircher*, who was then in *Rome*, ſome Pieces of Money; that he might examine them or have them aſſayed. And that he having paſſed them through all the Proofs, found it was Gold in all reſpects the ſame as the natural.

We muſt take the liberty to contradict *Zwelpher* in regard to this Fact; for we very well remember to have read in *Father Kircher*'s *Subterranean World*, that this learned Jeſuit being in *Rome*, and having heard the Report that the Emperor *Ferdinand* had made artificial Gold, he wrote to that Prince, of whom he was very much eſteemed, deſiring to know if it was true. And the Emperor (whoſe Letter Father *Kircher* there inſerts *Verbatim*) anſwered him, there was no ſuch thing. The Teſtimony of Father *Kircher* in this Matter, is of much ſuperior Weight to that of *Zwelpher*. And to ſay Truth, it's reaſonable to preſume, if that Emperor could have come at this Secret, he would at leaſt have made it hereditary in his Auguſt Family, for the Benefit thereof, and of all *Chriſtendom*. How came it to paſs then, that the three Emperors who ſucceeded him, made uſe of the ſame Methods of ſupplying their Emergencies, which other Princes are fain

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to do; and that ſometimes for want of Gold, They, as well as their Subjects, found themſelves not a little embaraſſed?

The third Example the Tranſlator of *Philalethes* brings, and which is ſtill more recent than the ſecond, is the *Conde Rochetti* of *Naples*; of whom it is ſaid, Not that he knew the Secret of preparing, but that he actually had the Philoſopher's Stone; having robb'd a poor Adept who lodged in his Houſe both of it and his Life. And that by the Uſe of this Stone he performed the Tranſmutation of Metals in the Preſence of ſeveral Princes and Potentates, whom he deceived and inveigled out of their Money, with a Promiſe of ſhewing them how to make this precious Medicine; till at laſt being at the Court of *Brandenburgh*, where he likewiſe impoſed upon that Sovereign, this Scene of Villany was diſcovered, and the Perpetrator of it was hang'd by the Elector's Order, in the Year 1708. The Tranſlator adds, that he himſelf was a Witneſs to ſeveral Tranſmutations performed in *Bruſſels*, not only by the ſaid *Conde Rochetti*, but likewiſe by *Maximilian Emanuel*, Duke of *Bavaria*, at that time Governor of the *Low Countries*; to whom *Rochetti* had preſented a little of the Philoſophical Tincture, which he had ſtolen from the Adept.

To the end that this Example ſhould make any Impreſſion on our Belief, we ought to be well aſſured that theſe Tranſmutations were actually perform'd, without the Intervention of ſome ſuch Illuſion or Juggle as has been contriv'd and generally practiſed by various Impoſtors, to perſuade People that they knew the Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone. In the *Treatiſe of human Life* before-mentioned, we read of a certain *Venetian* call'd *Bragadino*; who with ſuch kind of Tricks defrauded many Princes, and by the Strength of his ſeemingly apparent Operations, he made all the World believe that he was in poſſeſſion of the Secret of the Stone; till at length endeavouring likewiſe to impoſe upon the Duke of *Bavaria*, this Prince exploring his manner of working with more Circumſpection than the reſt, diſcovered the Roguery, and cauſed him to be hang'd. Why might not the Tranſmutations perform'd by *Rochetti* be of the ſame Stamp, purely deluſive as were thoſe of *Bragadino?* They both had the ſame fatal though deſerv'd Cataſtrophe; and we are apt to think made uſe of the ſame Artifice likewiſe. But what ſhall we ſay to the Tranſmutations ſaid to be perform'd by Duke *Maximilian?* Why, what needs more than that *Rochetti* had let his Highneſs into

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the juggling Secret he was Maſter of? and this Prince amus'd himſelf ſometimes with the Performance of that innocent Legerdemain, wherein he did no Prejudice to any body; for Princes like other Men have their particular Fancies and Foibles.

It will not be amiſs in this Place juſt to mention ſome of the Stratagems which the tricking Alchymiſts make uſe of, to perſuade People that they can convert any of the imperfect Metals into Gold; which on the whole may be reduced to theſe following: Either they have the Gold in Powder, or in a Lump; concealed ſometimes in the Coals they make their Fire with, or in the Aſhes; other times in the very metallick Matter itſelf, which they pretend to tranſmute into Gold. As for Inſtance, Suppoſe they ſhould put a Piece of Iron into the Crucible; this is Iron only on the exterior Part or Superficies, and real Gold within. Sometimes again they conceal it in the End of an Iron Rod made hollow for that Purpoſe, wherewith they are wont to ſtir the Mixture about while it is in Fuſion over the Fire; and the Gold which afterwards appears in a Lump at the Bottom of the Crucible, is no other than what they had hid in this Inſtrument, and melted during the Operation. Theſe are the Devices which

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at preſent we recollect to have read in ſeveral Authors; but there may be, and doubtleſs have been, and ſtill are, many others which are not yet detected.

Sometimes theſe Impoſtors carry on their Intrigues with ſuch a complicated Diſſimulation and Depth of Plot, that they will deceive the moſt cautious Perſon living; whereof the following Relation may ſerve as an Inſtance. One of theſe pretended Alchymiſts being at the Court of *Erneſt*, Marquis of *Baden*, found means to be introduced to that Prince, and as a Proof of his Ability, offered to make Gold in his Preſence; which being embraced, and he deſir'd immediately to put it in Execution, he ſaid, he had none of the Matter about him wherewith it was made; but that it was a Powder of ſmall Price, which they would find in every Apothecary's or Druggiſt's Shop: The Operator giving the Name of the Powder, the Marquis ordered one of his own Domeſticks to go and fetch ſome of it. The firſt of the two Trades he happen'd to light on was a Druggiſt, who was a Foreigner juſt ſet up, and had opened his Shop and expoſed the different Wares he had to ſell, very advantageouſly near the Gates of the Palace. The Servant enquired whether he had ſuch a Powder; he readily

readily anſwer'd, yes; and in ſhort, ſold him the Quantity he was order'd to fetch, at almoſt as trifling a Price as if it had been Sand. This was carried to the Operator, who putting it into the Fire, together with a little Quickſilver, he after ſome ſmall time took out a Piece of fine Gold. The Marquis, mightily pleas'd with the Succeſs of the grand Secret he had diſclos'd to him, entertained the Alchymiſt magnificently, and gratify'd him like a Prince. Some time after, his ſmall Stock of Powder being exhauſted, and having a Mind to make a further Experiment of it by himſelf, the Marquis ſent to get a larger Quantity of this Powder; but it was no where to be had, nor was there an Apothecary or Druggiſt in the Place, but what declared they had never ſo much as heard any ſuch Name as the Alchymiſt call'd it by. As for the Druggiſt near the Palace Gates, from whoſe Shop it was formerly fetch'd, he was march'd off, and the Alchymiſt likewiſe. It came at laſt to be known, that theſe two Sharpers were Partners, and acted in Confederacy; and that the Druggiſt had deſignedly opened his Shop in that convenient Part, that whoever ſhould be ſent for the Powder, might be ſure to ſtumble on him firſt, whilſt the Alchymiſt was playing his part of the Farce within Doors; and in

ſhort;

ſhort, that the Powder, which in order to carry on the Impoſture, had been ſold at ſo very cheap a Rate, was really Gold mix'd and diſguiſed by Art. *Beyerlink* relates this merry Story, citing *Jeremias Meder* for his Author. And Father *Gaſpar Scotto* gives you much ſuch another, which happened at *Bruſſels*.

Notwithſtanding all that has been ſaid, we may at laſt, perhaps, be confronted with the little Bar which the late great Duke of *Florence* had amongſt the Rarities in his Cabinet, which was one half Iron, and the other half Gold; and conſequently, (as is generally ſuppoſed and affirmed) the half which was Gold, could not be made otherwiſe than by an alchymiſtical Tranſmutation of the Iron into Gold. But in anſwer to this, Monſieur *Homberg*, that excellent Chymiſt, and a Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences at *Paris*, diſcovered the Fallacy of this Bar; and in the printed Memoirs of the Academy, you may find the Artifice expoſed by him; he making it appear, that two ſeparate Pieces, the one of Iron, and the other of Gold, may be united, or ſoldered together in ſuch a manner, as to ſeem to the Eye but one identical Piece.

Hitherto

Hitherto then, we have oppoſed the Poſſibility of metallick Tranſmutation; that is to ſay, in the manner the Alchymiſts pretend to it; for we ſhould be inconſiſtent with ourſelves, abſolutely to deny the Poſſibility of making Gold at all, by reaſon, in the former Part of our Diſcourſe, we have endeavoured to eſtabliſh this Point in the Affirmative. But as we have not the Preſumption to imagine our Arguments muſt of Neceſſity be concluſive and convincing to all ſorts of People, we will ſtill add further, That even though this Art were poſſible in the greateſt Latitude the Alchymiſts themſelves pronounce it, no body ought to apply themſelves to the Study of it. It would rather be the Heighth of Imprudence ſo to do, by reaſon of the great Improbability of ever obtaining a good Iſſue therefrom.

This Improbability ariſes from various Foundations; ſome of which I ſhall particularly mention for the Reader's Admonition.

The firſt Obſtacle is, That as the Alchymiſts themſelves confeſs, amongſt thouſands of Men who have dedicated the greateſt Part of their Lives to this Science, and have

with the cloſeſt Application been hunting after the Philoſopher's Stone, only one, or very rarely two have found it. Who then can with any Likelihood perſuade himſelf, that he is to be one of that ſlender Number of the Fortunate, and not rather one of the immenſe Multitude of the Unſucceſsful? Or who, with the leaſt Shadow of Prudence, will follow a Trade, wherein not above one in a Thouſand becomes Rich, and all the reſt gather no other Fruit from their Labour and Pains, but to ſee themſelves reduced to greater Poverty? It would be well for every body, the leaſt infected with this kind of Cacoethes, to have in perpetual Remembrance, that Death-bed Saying of *Bernard Penotus*, an able Chymiſt, who lived to an hundred Years of Age, and had all his Life-time been in queſt of this airy Phantom. His Diſciples and Friends who ſurrounded his Bed a little before he expired, begged of him to communicate to 'em, the Secrets he had diſcover'd relating to the *Chryſopoiea*; and the Anſwer he gave 'em was, Friends, I have no other Secret to commit to your Truſt, but only this; That if you ſhould have any powerful Enemy whom you would fain deſtroy, procure him to be inſpired with an ardent Deſire of Searching after the Philoſopher's Stone: This is the

greateſt

greateſt Miſchief you can do him. Monſieur *Du Clos*, a Phyſician at *Paris*, who died aged 87, and ſpent very little time in the Way of his Profeſſion; the greateſt part being taken up in his Study of the *Chryſopoiea*; left much ſuch another *Memento* to his Acquaintance when he was dying.

The ſecond Obſtacle which renders the attaining this Secret very improbable (and indeed morally impoſſible) is the want of Inſtruction. The Means which are generally made uſe of to obtain it, is the reading of ſuch Authors who profeſſedly treat on this Subject: But theſe, inſtead of affording any Light, preſent nothing but Shadows; ſo great is the Obſcurity of the Stile they write in. Thoſe who have ſpoke with the greateſt Clarity amongſt 'em, have only given us to underſtand thoſe few general theorical Principles we have before taken notice of; but when they come to treat of the Practice, and the ſeveral Operations whereby this Tincture of Gold is to be extracted and perfected; all of 'em, without reſerving one, inſconce their Meaning behind ſuch impenetrable Enigma's, that although a thouſand *OEdipus*'s were to be join'd, they could not be deciphered; ſo that he who does moſt, may be ſaid to

be like the River *Alpheus*, which runs above Ground for a very little Space, and the greateſt Part of its Courſe hides itſelf under the Earth. *Philalethes* (of whom his Tranſlator ſays, that he wrote with more Clearneſs than all the reſt) confeſſes of himſelf, *Chap.* 14. That he does not call Things by their proper Names. If then this is the Manner of Explication of him that ſpeaks with the greateſt Clearneſs, what are we to expect from the reſt? Or indeed, what can we expect from him?

In effect, the Authors of the firſt Rank amongſt the Alchymiſts unanimouſly agree, that they themſelves alone underſtand what they write; but thoſe who know nothing of the Art, will get no Inſight from their Books, unleſs it be by divine Inſpiration or Revelation. *Theobald Hogheland*, in his Treatiſe, *De Difficultatibus Alchymiæ*, *pars* 2. produces ſeveral Inſtances of this. The Author himſelf confeſſes, that notwithſtanding he had an hundred Books concerning this Art (which it appears evidently he had well turn'd over) he was not one Tittle the wiſer for 'em.

The third Obſtacle ariſes from the Incoherence and Contradictions of the Alchymiſts, not only in what relates to the Degree

gree of Preparation, wherein ſome require a greater, others a leſſer Number of Operations; but they vary likewiſe in the Subſtance and Series of 'em. Some will have the firſt Operation to begin with the Solution, others the Calcination, others again, the Sublimation of the Matter: And here it's worth obſerving, that though the Tranſlator of *Philalethes* took upon himſelf to reconcile the Contradictions he found in regard to the Matter of the Stone, wherein he has ſucceeded tolerably well; he entirely paſſes over in ſilence thoſe that relate to the Manner of Operation, which are almoſt as many as the others.

But the moſt conſpicuous, and at the ſame Time, the moſt ridiculous Inconſiſtency obſervable in theſe alchymiſtical Writers is the following. All, or almoſt all the Chriſtian Authors who have wrote on this Subject, give for an indiſpenſable Precept, That he who intends to apply himſelf to this Art, muſt be a good Chriſtian, Devout, Humble, of a right Intention, and of a pure Conſcience; and they unanimouſly agree, that without theſe Qualifications, which they abſolutely make the *Sine qua non*, he can never attain to the Knowledge of this grand Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone. On the other hand they confeſs, that this

Secret

Secret was handed down by the *Arabians* to the *Latins*. And the primordial Authors, or Princes of their Sect, which they quote on every Occaſion, are all a Rabble of *Sarazens* and *Mahometans*. *Geber*, *Rhaſis*, *Avicene*, *Haly*, *Calid*, *Jazich*, *Bendegid*, *Bolzain*, *Albagazel*; from theſe it is, that *Lully*, *Villa-nova*, *Paracelſus*, *Baſil Valentine*, *Treviſan*, *Morienus*, *Roſſinus*, and the reſt of the *European* Authors, have collected what they have wrote, celebrating them for remarkably great Adepts; eſpecially *Geber*, who ſeems to bear away the Bell from 'em all. Reconcile me this Paradox, he that can. They tell us it's neceſſary, in order to attain the *Chryſopoiea*, to practiſe the Goſpel; and at the ſame Inſtant, propoſe to us, as the greateſt Maſters of the Art, the Sectaries of the *Alcoran*.

From what has been ſaid it may be inferred, That the Writings of the Alchymiſts can only be uſeful to thoſe who read 'em, not for Inſtruction, but by way of Entertainment and Diverſion, like the Novels or Romances of Don *Bellianis* of *Greece*, or *Amadis de Gaul*. Yet, we do not for this condemn thoſe Authors, who without boaſting of their actually knowing the Secret of the Stone, treat this Subject philoſophically, as the Tranſlator of *Philalethes* has

has done, contending for the Poſſibility only; whereto a great many Men of Judgment and Learning have aſſented. This Subject is as worthy of a ſerious Diſquiſition, as many others that are purely philoſophical: But as to the Books of thoſe Alchymiſts, who promiſe by the Strength of their Precepts, the Conſecution of this profound Myſtery, I believe we may do by them as the Alchymiſts themſelves do with the Metals; that is to ſay, calcine, diſſolve, amalgamate, ſmelt, precipitate them, *&c.* Or when we may not be inclined to proceed quite ſo rigorouſly, let us make the ſame Eſtimation of 'em, that *Leo* the Tenth made of a Book which a certain Alchymiſt dedicated to him. The Author, doubtleſs, expected a conſiderable Gratuity from that generous Patron of Arts and good Letters; but what the Pope did, dwindled into an empty Purſe, which he made him a Preſent of; telling him withal, that ſeeing he was Maſter of the Art of making Gold, he could ſtand in need of nothing more than a Purſe to put it in.

DEDICATION.

TO

The Venerable Fraternity

Of the moſt

Laudable Order of the R. C.

VENERABLE,

THE almoſt univerſal Aim of modern Authors in their Dedications, is to flatter and ſooth the Vanity of ſome powerful rich Man, whom they have pitch'd upon to be their Patron for two important Reaſons: The one is, becauſe they expect to be rewarded by him for the unmerited Praiſes they have ſo laviſhly beſtow'd; and the other is, that by the Rank and Figure

of their Patron, they would endeavour to palm themſelves upon the Publick for Perſons of much more Conſequence than they really are. I think I ſhall hardly be ſuſpected by the World of either of theſe ſiniſter Intentions; becauſe, in the firſt place, I am ſo far from flattering you, that the Tract I here preſent you with the Tranſlation of, was wrote by a profeſs'd Enemy to your Society, on purpoſe to ridicule and explode an eſſential Part of your Science; or indeed what he, with the generality of the miſtaken World, ſeems to look on as the Principal; though the wiſe and illuminated Sons of the Art regard it only as a Parergon. This then will clear me from the Imputation of Flattery, which you can have no Inducement to be fond of; nor do I know how it would be poſſible to beſtow it on you. And, in the next place, it is not to be thought that I have pitch'd upon you for my Patrons, in order to create a good Opinion of my Underſtanding and Abilities among the Scioliſts; becauſe theſe are already ſo prejudiced againſt, not only your Profeſſions, but your very Exiſtence, that to go about to vindicate the One, or aſſert the Other, would be deemed a moſt indubitable Symptom of a diſtemper'd Brain. And yet, notwithſtanding this Diſcouragement, as well as thoſe ſo copiouſly diffuſed

through-

throughout the foregoing Diſſertation, I hereby freely confeſs, that I am exceedingly inclined to believe your Profeſſions to be laudable and true, and your Exiſtence to be ſure and certain; nay, and what's more, that I expect ſome time or other to be both better and wiſer for your Elucidations. And now, after this Declaration, a clear Stage be my Lot; for I ſhall be ſure to meet with no Quarter. If our Scioliſts or modern Philoſophers ſhould have Good-nature enough (which I ſcarce think they have) to pity me for embracing what they call a Chimera, I ſhall in return pity them for thinking it ſuch. On the contrary, if (as is moſt likely) their Spleen ſhould abound ſo much, as to incite them to rail at me for not thinking like them, they will be the greateſt Sufferers themſelves, becauſe it's a Diſeaſe they'll never be cured of, and I ſhall only pity them ſtill. I am thoroughly convinc'd, 'tis but a very few that are worthy of being entruſted with ſo ineſtimable a Secret as you are able to make them Maſters of; and, as to myſelf, I ingenuouſly own to you, I am ſo ſenſible of my own Frailties, that I ſincerely wiſh to be more perfect, in order to be qualified to know more; or, for my own Peace ſake, That I had been leſs a Sceptick, and had never taken the Pains of ſearching, in order to know

know so much of it, as to induce me to subscribe myself, as I do with the profoundest Veneration,

A true Admirer of

your laudable Professions,

Damcar.

Philo Philalethes.

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